Position and Opposition: Mike Mansfield, J. William Fulbright, and Opposition to Vietnam

Research Thesis

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by

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In the United States, the Constitution enumerates most foreign policy powers to the president. This makes it extremely difficult for a member of Congress to influence foreign policy. There are really two ways a member can influence foreign policy. The first way is to directly influence the executive. The second is to go to the American people in hopes that the executive will be moved by public opinion. Two notable historical examples are Senators Mike Mansfield and J. William Fulbright. They attempted to guide American foreign policy during the Vietnam War. Their goal was to influence President Lyndon B. Johnson, a member of their own political party. To achieve this goal the Senators took two opposing paths to influence the president. Mansfield privately advised Johnson; Fulbright went to the American public. Both were influenced by a multitude of factors that led to their choice of tactic; factors such as their position in government, the Democratic Party, personal relationships with the president, and variable allegiances to domestic policy.

To this point much of the discussion surrounding Johnson, Fulbright and Mansfield has been reserved for biographies or histories of the circumstances surrounding the Vietnam War. In these histories, authors expose the reader to either the binary relationship between the subject and other people or a complex cast of characters with webs of relationships. Randall Woods and Don Oberdorfer did exceptional work about the lives of Fulbright and Mansfield, but the scope of these histories encompassed the entirety of their subjects life, and left little time to examine Vietnam opposition in greater detail.[1] On the other hand, Fredrick Logevall's, *Choosing War* examined executive decisions with little note on the importance of legislators in Vietnam policy.[2]

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[1] Don Oberdorfer, *Senator Mansfield: The Extraordinary Life of a Great American Statesman and Diplomat* (Washington D.C: Smithsonian Books, 2003); Randall Woods, *Fulbright: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[2] Fredrick Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

Another work that closely mirrors this research is Gregory Olson's book, *Mansfield and Vietnam*. Olson's book explores the rhetorical tactics of Mansfield's opposition and how he adapted his writing throughout the war.[3] The following analysis of Fulbright and Mansfield explores the complexity of position in government, the Democratic party, relationships, and agendas, and how these factors interplay to affect their opposition to American foreign policy in Vietnam.

Two significant factors that affected Mansfield and Fulbright's method of opposition were: their position in the government and personal relationship with Johnson. Mansfield was the Senate Majority Leader, a position key to pass legislation. Mansfield's position meant that no friendly Democratic executive could alienate him and lose one of their most powerful allies in Congress. However, Mansfield's position was not the only attribute to his influence on American foreign policy making. During the Johnson Administration, Mansfield was able to leverage the relationship he developed during his time as Johnson's Whip and protégé in the Senate. These combined factors left Mansfield in a key position to directly voice his opposition to Johnson on Vietnam policy. At the same time, these factors drove Mansfield to keep his protest private. Mansfield was loyal to his old mentor and leader of the Democratic Party. He did not publicly decry Johnson for his Vietnam policy, though from 1965 to the end of the Johnson Administration in 1968 he counseled the president on de-escalation, negotiation and peace. Fulbright, on the other hand, did not share the advantages or limitations of Mansfield's position in the Senate nor a personal relationship with Johnson. As Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), Fulbright believed that it was his role to challenge the

[3] Gregory A. Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam: A Study in Rhetorical Adaptation* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995).

executive branch on the effectiveness of its foreign policy and propose policy alternatives. The chairmanship had limited power to affect change, but it was an effective bully pulpit from which to voice opposition.

Both Fulbright and Mansfield were in key government positions to voice opposition to the Vietnam War. Surprisingly, their roles in the Senate did not have the greatest effect on their method of opposition to executive Vietnam policy. Instead, for both men, their opposition was dictated by allegiance to the Democratic Party agenda. Johnson set forth sweeping liberal, domestic agenda, with the central goal of achieving civil rights. Johnson sold his "Great Society" as a successor to Roosevelt's New Deal and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as memorial to the late President Kennedy. Fulbright, a Southern Democrat, had no interest in civil rights. He even made his first comments on Vietnam during the Southern filibuster of the Civil Rights Act. Often, Fulbright's constituency rewarded him for opposing Johnson's legislation and this lack of allegiance to Johnson's liberal, domestic agenda enabled him to break from the administration's policies in Vietnam. But for Mansfield, the Democratic Party agenda was paramount. He was a classic Western liberal, in the likeness of Johnson. Although not devoted to the civil rights debate, Mansfield supported Johnson's push for the Civil Rights Act and social programs like Medicare. Mansfield's devotion to the Democratic Party Agenda and Johnson's "Great Society," drove him to self-censor regarding Vietnam policy. Mansfield knew that a fractured Democratic Party would struggle to pass legislation. This meant that Mansfield could not split the party on an issue like Vietnam. Fulbright and Mansfield's conflicting tactics in opposition to the Vietnam War, brought them to loggerheads. Mansfield defended the White House's policy despite his agreement with much of Fulbright's criticism of its Vietnam policy.

Section 1: Mansfield, first in, first out.

The first decade of American involvement in Vietnam, from 1953-1963, was a convoluted mess of post-colonial entanglement and domino-theory obsession for no one more than Senator Mike Mansfield. He began his involvement with Vietnam in 1953 as a freshman senator and staunch cold warrior; he ended the decade as the Senate Majority leader and one of the first opponents of involvement in Vietnam. Mansfield's experience with East Asia began with his time in the Marine Corps during the early 1920s, when he served on the Chinese mainland and visited the Philippines. Mansfield cited this experience as one that led to his fascination with East Asia and led him to pursue a degree in East Asian History, with a master's thesis entitled "American Diplomatic Relations with Korea, 1866-1910."[4] Following his first electoral victory in 1942, Mansfield was placed on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where he often spoke on Asian issues. During his tenure in the House, Mansfield was sent to Chiang Kai-Shek's China in 1944 as personal emissary for President Roosevelt. This trip to China cemented Mansfield's position as the leading Asia expert in Congress.[5] Just shy of a decade later in 1953, following his election to the United States Senate, Mansfield was appointed to the SFRC as a rare freshman committee member.[6] This appointment and his position as one of the few Asia experts in Washington allowed Mansfield to have a great effect on American policy in Asia.

Mansfield's major interest in Vietnam and Indochina began early; formed around the pro-Western and Catholic Vietnamese nationalist Ngo Dinh Diem, whom he met at a luncheon hosted by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. At the luncheon, Mansfield and Diem's

[4] Oberdorfer, *Senator Mansfield*, 27.
[5] Ibid, 63.
[6] Ibid, 111.

meeting set a course for the United States' involvement in Southeast Asia for the next twenty years.[7] Diem's credentials as both a nationalist and a fellow Catholic enthralled Mansfield. When Diem solicited support for an independent South Vietnam that could fight on its own, he found a welcome attitude in the freshman senator from Montana. During the meeting, Diem called for Vietnamese independence with the claim that "the French could not beat the Communists and would have to rely on the Vietnamese to do it."[8] Mansfield's affinity for Diem played a key role in his initial support of Diem's regime following the French withdrawal in 1954. In his *Report on Indochina*, authored after a trip to Indochina in 1954, Mansfield wrote: "Should the Diem government be forced out of office it is doubtful that…a more satisfactory substitute…will be found."[9] Diem's Pro-Western and Anti-Communist beliefs made him the obvious choice, for Mansfield, to be the leader of South Vietnam. Mansfield's comment on the lack of other pro-Western leaders was almost certainly untrue but Diem's leadership meant that the United States did not have to look for other leaders since he was hard at work getting rid of potential usurpers.[10] Though not entirely committed to American involvement in Vietnam, Mansfield viewed Diem as a bulwark against the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. Mansfield's most telling remark on his faith in Diem came at the end of his report:

> In the event that the Diem government falls, therefore, I believe that the United States should consider an immediate suspension of all aid to Vietnam and the French Union forces there, except that of a humanitarian nature, preliminary to a complete reappraisal of our present policies in Free Vietnam. Unless there is reasonable expectation of

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[7] Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam*, 19.
[8] Edmund A Gullion, Memorandum of Conversation "Discussion of Indochina" May 7, 1953. *Foreign Relations of United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1952-1954, Indochina, Volume XIII, Part 1.
[9] Mike Mansfield, *Report on Indochina*, report Prepared for the use of Senate Committee on Foreign Relation, 83rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1954.
[10] Edward Miller, *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, The United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 187.

> fulfilling our objectives the continued expenditure of the resources… is unwarranted and inexcusable.[11]

When queried by the Eisenhower Administration on issues of policy in Vietnam Mansfield supported Diem, support that cemented the American aid programs to Vietnam and tied the United States to South Vietnam until its withdrawal in 1975.[12] However, it was also with Diem that the seeds for Mansfield's break with the future Kennedy and Johnson administrations were laid.

As the statements above reveal, Mansfield's support for Vietnam was limited and contingent. His misgivings about American involvement in Vietnam were apparent as early as 1955 when, in a memorandum to Undersecretary of State Herbert Hoover Jr., he expressed his concern over the methods through which aid was sent to Southeast Asia and insisted that the aid programs needed to be audited to ensure they could best serve American interests.[13] Mansfield continued his critique of American aid programs a year later when, on the Senate floor, he called for a "Hoover-type" commission, a reference to President Harry Truman's Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government. This was to stop what he described as the "mismanagement" of aid programs to Southeast Asia.[14] Mansfield's public criticism of executive handling of aid programs to Southeast Asia continued until the end of the Eisenhower Administration, but he became silent on the issue with the swearing-in of the Democratic Kennedy Administration. Mansfield was concerned that American aid entangled the United

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[11] Mansfield, *Report on Indochina*.
[12] Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam*, 68.
[13] Walter Spencer Robinson, Memorandum to Under Secretary of State Herbert Hoover Jr, "U.S. Programs in Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam," November 22, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-11957, Vietnam, Vol. 1, 585.
[14] Mike Mansfield, speaking on HR 11356, 84th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* 102 (June 29, 1956), 11351.

States in Vietnam rather than aiding the Vietnamese in development of their nation and their ability to fight the Viet Cong on their own.

However, once a friendly Democratic administration occupied the White House, Mansfield chose to keep his concerns private. With Kennedy in the White House and Mansfield as the new Senate majority leader, the Montanan was far more careful about public criticism of the executive's foreign policy. Mansfield now had a direct line to the president due to his relationship with Kennedy and his new position as majority leader. He used this position to lobby against increased escalation in Vietnam and for more effective use of American aid programs. In November 1961, Mansfield began to voice his opinions via memoranda sent to Kennedy. He urged Kennedy to limit direct American involvement in Vietnam and emphasized letting the Vietnamese fight their own war. On November 2, 1961, Mansfield wrote:

> I would wholeheartedly favor, if necessary and feasible, a substantial increase of American military and economic aid to Viet Nam, but leave the responsibility of carrying the physical burden of meeting communist infiltration, subversion, and attack on the shoulders of the South Vietnamese, whose country it is and whose future is their chiefs responsibility.[15]

Though Mansfield was already wary of the effects of mismanaged aid to Vietnam, he knew that the only solution to limiting the United States' involvement in Southeast Asia was allowing the Vietnamese to fight their own war. This meant not directly involving U.S. troops in a way that might damage the legitimacy of the South Vietnamese government or risk conflict with Communist China. Mansfield viewed the potential use of American troops as akin to recolonization and warned that it would hurt the Diem regime's ability to develop popular support. Thus, Mansfield preferred the use of economic and political aid rather than military aid.

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[15] Mansfield Memorandum to President Kennedy, "The Vietnamese and South East Asian Situation" Nov. 2, 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol I. Vietnam, 1961, 468.

He often recommended aid programs similar to those of the Marshall plan. Mansfield also stressed the importance of ensuring that no matter how much the United States gave to fund economic development, they should keep their name "in small print" to ensure that the aid had its maximum effect, bolstering support for the South Vietnamese government.[16]

Increasingly worried with the White House's commitments to South Vietnam, Mansfield briefly took his concerns about the situation in Vietnam into the public forum. During a commencement address at Michigan State University in June 1962, Mansfield underlined the need for public discourse on the situation in Southeast Asia. He said, "Support for the president does not preclude discussion."[17] Mansfield pointed to the increase in the number of headlines about places like Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam but still described them as places "remote from the general awareness of the nation."[18] Much of Mansfield's address echoed the concerns he raised in his memorandum to President Kennedy in November. Although Mansfield did publicly criticize President Kennedy's policies and their potential to draw the United States into a war on the Asian mainland, he also recognized the president's role as the director of American foreign policy. His reverence for the Office of the President and his seat as the Senate majority leader greatly hindered Mansfield's willingness to speak out against the president's choices on foreign policy issues.

Mansfield's concerns with the situation in Vietnam had slowly grown since 1955, his hopes rapidly deteriorated following a fact-finding mission to the country in late 1962. Mansfield described Vietnam in the "same terms as on my last visit although it has been seven years and

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Mike Mansfield, "Interests and Polices in Southeast Asia," June 10,1962, East Lansing, Michigan, JFK Library, Mike Mansfield, April 1962 - September 1963.
[18] Ibid.

billions of dollars later."[19] Mansfield blamed the situation in Vietnam on the Eisenhower and Kennedy administration's aid programs. He wrote in his report: "Our aid programs, military and non-military, after all, were one of the principal sources of the origin and the continuance of that government's power…. That structure is today, far more dependent on us for its existence than it was five years ago.[20]" However, Mansfield did not solely blame the United States for the mismanagement of American funds. He placed part of the blame on the Diem regime. He described much of its leadership as "paid retainers and sycophants," but still praised the individual leadership of Diem as "dedicated, sincere, hardworking, incorruptible and patriotic."[21]

Although Mansfield witnessed the misappropriation of American aid and the increased dependence of South Vietnam on the United States, he still viewed Diem as the sole thread that tied the United States to the potential for a self-sustaining, anti-communist South Vietnam. Mansfield attempted to communicate to President Kennedy that the aid situation in Vietnam created dependence on the United States. American aid corrupted the Diem regime and hindered its ability to develop the popular support it needed to function independently. Mansfield viewed the dependence on American aid as a gateway to further United States involvement in Vietnam's internal politics. He recommended in the same memorandum that the United States should reevaluate its interests in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Mansfield's fears of expanded American involvement in Vietnam and the potential for wider-scale conflict led him to finish his report with a simple claim: "We may well discover that it is in our interest to do less rather than more than we are doing now."[22] Mansfield could see where Vietnam was headed. His push for more

[19] Mike Mansfield, Report to the President, "Southeast Asia – Viet Nam," December 18, 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume II, Vietnam, 1962, 779.
[20]Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

thoughtful American aid was primarily an attempt to solidify the Diem regime. But he also anticipated the need for an American exit strategy from an increasingly unstable region.

Mansfield's final memorandum was a warning of the impending quagmire that was engulfing the United States. In August 1963, religious tensions erupted between the Catholics and Buddhists; Mansfield's concerns for the stability of the Diem regime were becoming a reality. Mansfield's last Vietnam memorandum to President Kennedy was sent on August 19, 1963, during the Buddhist crisis. In this memorandum, Mansfield laid out the necessity for the United States to reevaluate the reason for continued support of Vietnam. Mansfield stated clearly at the start of his memorandum, "It is necessary to face the fact that either way – with the present government or with a replacement – we are in for a very long haul to develop even a modicum of stability in Vietnam."[23] Mansfield's comments showed his weariness with the situation in Vietnam. He implied that if the United States did not extricate itself it would be locked into the conflict for some time. Mansfield asked Kennedy to question why the United States was committed to Vietnam when he wrote:

> We may well ask ourselves, once more, not the tactical question, but the fundamental question: Is South Viet Nam as important to us as the premise on which we are now apparently operating indicates? Is it really as important to us as it is to the Vietnamese themselves? Or have we, by our own repeated rhetorical flourishes on "corks in bottles" and "stopping Communism everywhere" and the loose use of the phrase "vital interests of the nation" over the past few years given this situation a highly inflated importance and, hence, talked ourselves into the present bind?

Mansfield tried to guide Kennedy to the conclusion that South Vietnam was never of any real national interest to the United States. His questions urged Kennedy to recognize that Vietnam was not part of some grand American security zone but instead that the administration had

[23] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Kennedy, "Observations on Viet Nam" August 19, 1963, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume III, Vietnam, January-August 1963, 585.

convinced itself of Vietnam's vital interest to American security through its own rhetoric. Near the end of his memo Mansfield finally broke with the Diem regime he supported for so long when he wrote, "We reserve ourselves the right to determine… when to assist, when not to assist, and when, if necessary, when to withdraw assistance." As in his earlier memorandums, Mansfield never told the president what to do or how to do it, but after years of hoping the Vietnamese government would reform, Mansfield was openly considering withdrawal from South Vietnam. He did not see the survival of a non-communist South Vietnam as worth the American lives or treasure that could be lost. However, just days following his memorandum, the pagoda raids against Vietnamese Buddhists ended the Kennedy administration's support of the Diem regime, and four months later – with the death of two presidents – the fate of the United States was sealed.[24]

The assassinations of Kennedy and Diem facilitated the United States policy of military involvement that Mansfield had long feared. Following Kennedy's assassination, President Johnson wanted to keep as much continuity with the Kennedy Administration as possible. Johnson retained the policies and advisers from the former administration. Although he had previously taken issue with the American policy in Vietnam, particularly with Kennedy's choice to allow the coup against Diem, he chose to stay the course. Johnson believed he could not make major digressions from the former administration's policies now that they were overwhelmingly popular following Kennedy's death. On November 24, 1963, in a meeting with his senior foreign policy leadership, Johnson decided to "see to it that… objectives were accomplished."[25] In his memorandum on the meeting, John McCone, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency,

[24] Miller, *Misalliance*, 279.
[25] John McCone, Memorandum for the Record, November 24, 1963, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume IV, Vietnam, August-December 1963 635.

described the new "President Johnson tone" in reference to Johnson's anxiety to "win the war" rather than waste time on social reforms in Vietnam.[26]

Mansfield seized the opportunity of Johnson's ascension to the presidency to launch a new campaign to influence American policy and avoid further entanglement in Vietnam. With Johnson as the new president, Mansfield's line to the executive was far more direct than it had been with Kennedy. Mansfield had worked as Johnson's whip during his time as Senate majority leader, and the two had developed an effective working relationship and deep friendship. Mansfield tried to use his friendship with Johnson to help guide the president away from an American conflict in Vietnam. By February 1964 Mansfield authored three Vietnam memos that urged Johnson not to escalate the war and provided alternate solutions to the problem in Vietnam. Mansfield began his pleas much as he had with Kennedy. He reminded Johnson that the conflict in Vietnam was one for the Vietnamese to solve. Mansfield also warned about the dangers of American troops in Vietnam as the impetus for the Chinese involvement in the conflict like happened during the Korean war.[27] Mansfield's constant allusions to the Korean war were no accident. The threat of China was real, but the allusion was twofold. First, he simply warned the new president of the potential for full-scale land war in Asia. In addition, Mansfield reminded President Johnson of the political fallout that had come from Truman's decisions in Korea. Those decisions ultimately resulted in a Republican White House for eight years. Therefore, Mansfield's comparisons to Korea were almost a veiled threat

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[26] Ibid, 636-637.

[27] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson, "Southeast Asia and Viet Nam," December 7, 1963. "Memos of McGeorge Bundy, November 23, 1963 - February 29, 1964, including meetings with Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara, hostages in Bolivia, and Panama City, Panama riots." Memos of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs: McGeorge Bundy to President Johnson, 1963-1966, Volume I, November 23, 1963-February 29, 1964, ProQuest (Hereafter, "Memos of McGeorge Bundy, November 23, 1963 - February 29, 1964): Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson, "Viet Namese Situation" January 6, 1964, Memos of McGeorge Bundy, November 23, 1963 - February 29, 1964.

to Johnson of how he might bring ruin to his political ambitions if he did not take necessary action to avoid a war in Vietnam.

Johnson too saw Vietnam in the context of Truman era analogies, but his reference point was different. Johnson viewed Truman's reluctance to push the Chinese back in Korea as weakness and saw Truman's failure to stand up to communism as the lesson to be learned.[28] A freshman senator in 1949, Johnson had witnessed Truman being pilloried for allowing the communist victory in China and for sacking Douglas MacArthur after he advocated expanding the Korean War. Years later, the former president even argued that "Harry Truman and Dean Acheson had lost their effectiveness from the day that the communists took over in China."[29] The new president had plans for sweeping domestic reform in his "Great Society" so he could not afford to lose his effectiveness or the looming election in 1964. Johnson's contrary understanding of the comparison between Vietnam and the Truman era may have led Mansfield's allusions to fall on deaf ears, or they may have steeled Johnson in his conviction to hold South Vietnam at seemingly any cost.

Though Mansfield was in the business of political scare tactics when he wrote to Johnson, he did propose a legitimate solution: neutralization. Neutralization was, in essence, the international establishment of non-aligned buffer states in areas of geopolitical conflict. The tactic of neutralization, in the case of South Vietnam, proposed by French President Charles De Gaulle, who understood all too well the dangers of military involvement in Vietnam. Neutralization was Mansfield's go-to solution for Vietnam in the first year of Johnson's presidency. For Mansfield, the choice to neutralize Vietnam meant no risk of conflict with China

[28] Logevall, *Choosing*, 76-77
[29] Lyndon B. Johnson, quoted in ibid., 76-77.

or the Soviet Union. It also removed the looming threat of American involvement and the resulting damage sustained to Johnson's domestic agenda. Mansfield saw the neutralization of Laos and the creation of a three-party coalition government as an example of a peaceful solution that could be used in Vietnam.

However, many of the Kennedy Administration holdovers had witnessed the negative political effects of Laotian neutralization. Kennedy opponents saw the policy as too compromising. One *New York Times* reporter wrote, "It is silly for the United States to pretend that the neutralization of Laos… is a satisfactory arrangement."[30] Thus, the Johnson Administration policy was to support the new anti-communist military junta in South Vietnam rather than a policy neutralization. In one memorandum to the president, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy wrote: "We may have to move in these painful directions [neutralization], but we should do so only when there is a much stronger demonstration that our present course cannot work. If we neutralize, it should not be because we have quit but because others have."[31] Bundy made it clear that neutralization should be a last-ditch effort to leave Vietnam, not a solution to be worked toward.

Mansfield was working closely with the White House helping shepherd Johnson's "Great Society" through Congress but his advice on Southeast Asia was having little effect. In his memorandum on February 1, 1964 Mansfield did not mince words. He began with a terse reminder to reread his earlier memos, copies of which he included. Mansfield began his observation with a scathing remark on the assassination of President Diem. Mansfield described

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[30] C.L. Sulzberger. "Foreign Affairs: Shadow and Substance in Laos Terms and Application." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jun 18, 1962, http://proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/historical-newspapers/foreign-affairs/docview/116111030/se-2?accountid=9783

[31] McGeorge Bundy, Memorandum to President Johnson "Senator Mansfield's Views on South Vietnam" January 6, 1964, Memos of McGeorge Bundy, November 23, 1963 - February 29, 1964.

Diem as the "slim cord of political legitimacy" that had tied the United States to Vietnam. Mansfield had long seen Diem as the solution to Vietnam. But without Diem, Mansfield saw no hope for the American position in Vietnam. Following his comments on Diem, Mansfield again reminded Johnson of the absence of American national interest in Vietnam and warned that a military involvement would lead to a "morass… on the verge of indefinite entrapment."[32] Mansfield, again called for neutralization.

However, Johnson and his staff had already eliminated neutralization as a policy option. In a memorandum preparing President Johnson for a meeting with Mansfield, Bundy wrote about Mansfield's neutralization plan that, "On Vietnam, he continues to believe in the de Gaulle approach, we don't." Bundy's repudiation of neutralization was the standard Johnson Administration approach from the outset. What they wanted was a strong, anti-communist bulwark in South Vietnam, not another neutral state like Laos. Bundy's memo made it clear that the White House needed Mansfield to keep quiet on the issue and recommend the president request Mansfield "not express his doubts in public."[33] Mansfield's early and urgent pleas for both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to limit American involvement in Vietnam fell on deaf ears. Then with Bundy's effort to keep Mansfield quiet, one of the conflict's greatest opponents kept much of his protests between himself and the president. But Mansfield never kept his concerns entirely private.

When the Administration's policy makers spurned his advice, Mansfield chose to speak out publicly but never directly criticized the president. On February 19, 1964, he spoke to the

[32] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson "The Vietnamese Situation" February 1, 1964, Memos of McGeorge Bundy, November 23, 1963 - February 29, 1964.
[33] McGeorge Bundy, Memorandum to President Johnson "Note for your meeting with Senator Mansfield today at 6:00" February 10,1964, Memos of McGeorge Bundy, November 23, 1963 - February 29, 1964.

Senate about American policies in Vietnam. Mansfield both criticized and commended different elements of the administration's policy. Mansfield led with praise. He said that he took solace in the administration's continued reaffirmation that the conflict in Vietnam was a Vietnamese conflict and not an American conflict. Mansfield then moved to his criticism. He took issue with the new military junta leading Vietnam, the murder of Diem, and the new problems that he expected from the change in leadership. After the second coup in January 1964, only two months after the coup ousting Diem, he could not "conceivably justify the issuance of a new blank check on our aid funds and on the lives of American servicemen."[34] The blank check Mansfield warned against never was issued to the Vietnamese, but he and his congressional counterparts handed one to President Johnson later that year.

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in late 1964 gave the Johnson Administration a free hand for its Vietnam policy, while its greatest critic remained silent. Following a North Vietnamese attack on the destroyer USS *Maddox* on August 2, 1964 and a phantom second "attack" on the August 4th, President Johnson took the opportunity to ensure congressional support for his plan to expand the conflict. In his public report to the American people on the August 4, 1964 he said, "I shall immediately request the Congress to pass a resolution making it clear that our Government is united in its determination to take all necessary measures in support of freedom and in defense of peace in Southeast Asia."[35]

Mansfield opposed the direction that Johnson took but could not stop the president. Instead, he chose to keep his concerns about the war between himself and the administration for

[34] Mike Mansfield, "U.S. Policies on Vietnam," February 19, 1964, 88th Cong., 2nd Sess., *Congressional Record* 110, 3115.
[35] Lyndon Johnson, "Report on the Gulf of Tonkin Incident," August 4, 1964, University of Virginia, Miller Center, Presidential Speeches, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidency.

a wealth of reasons. First, he knew that Johnson had the powers to take the action without congressional approval. Second, the timing of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution was politically important. The presidential election was three months away, and the Democrats could not afford to appear split on the issue of Vietnam.[36] Lastly, Mansfield's relationship with Johnson left him blind to the fact that his colleague was not as committed to peace as he claimed to be.

Johnson, never one to lose an opportunity to expand his power, rapidly involved congressional leadership on the issue. He held a leadership meeting on the evening of August 4, 1964. The meeting included all senior members of congressional leadership as well as the chairs of the armed services and foreign relations committees, among others. At the meeting, Johnson and the members of the National Security Council (NSC) explained the situation in Vietnam, if perhaps a bit misleadingly, and called upon the members of Congress for a resolution to back retaliation against the North Vietnamese. Nearly all the congressmen at the meeting were in support of President Johnson. Many agreed with Senator Bourke Hickenlooper's comment that "There should be no doubt as to whether the president should have the right to order the Armed Forces into action." The only real opposition during the meeting came from Mansfield, who, much in line with his earlier concerns, said, "I don't know how much good it will do." Mansfield was at loggerheads with the administration, but he hesitated to defect. This set the stage for two years of quiet frustration for the Senator. When the president asked the leadership for their support, Mansfield simply acknowledged that "It will go before the Foreign Affairs Committee."[37] With this response Mansfield took his position for the time being as a member of the silent opposition.

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[36] Oberdorfer, *Senator Mansfield*, 246.
[37] Walter Jenkins, "Notes of the Leadership Meeting, White House" August 4, 1964, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, Volume I, Vietnam, 1964.

Although he had reservations about the conflict, Mansfield spoke in support of the resolution and the president. Mansfield's short address on the resolution took a somber tone: "We hope for the best. But let us prepare for the worst. The situation may well become more critical - far more critical - before its resolution becomes visible."[38] Mansfield publicly supported President Johnson's decision to retaliate against the Vietnamese, but he still chose to include a warning to Congress and the American people. That his vote for the resolution conflicted with his position did not matter. He again supported the president in his brief speech: "He [President Johnson] asks for and he will have, in this endeavor, the support of the Congress and the people of the United States."[39] Mansfield's support for the resolution came not only from respect for Johnson himself or respect for the position and powers of the executive but also from his belief in the need for national unity against communist aggression.

Nonetheless, Mansfield had not abandoned his opposition to the brewing war. After the Gulf of Tonkin resolution was passed, Mansfield once again returned to his private protest of Johnson's Vietnam policy. Mansfield renewed his writing to Johnson in December 1964. In his first memorandum after the Gulf of Tonkin resolution Mansfield immediately began with a criticism of the South Vietnamese failure to stop Viet Cong attacks in and around Saigon. He again criticized the policy that permitted the coup of the Diem regime. Mansfield claimed the coup made it almost impossible to come to the negotiating table with North Vietnam. Mansfield then turned to policy suggestions, many of which echoed his recommendation from early 1964: avoid American military involvement, help develop popular support for the Government of South Vietnam and encourage peaceful unification of Vietnam. Mansfield claimed that neither

[38] Mike Mansfield, speaking on H.J.Res. 1145, on August 4, 1964, 88th Cong. 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* 110, 18399.
[39] Ibid.

the "liberation" of the north nor the establishment of an independent South Vietnam was possible:

> The first [liberation of North Vietnam] is illusory without total United States involvement. The second and independent and isolated south Viet Nam is also illusory in present circumstances since it would require such a vast United States involvement as to negate the meaning of independence.[40]

Mansfield's memorandum reflected his continued support for neutralization. But he also understood that with the removal of Diem the path to a peaceful settlement in Vietnam had grown much longer. He still believed peace was possible through means other than the Americanization of the war.

The White House continued to refute Mansfield at every turn. The administration remained on a course of escalation rather than simple retaliatory action, much less an American withdrawal. As Fredrick Logevall points out in *Choosing War*, November and December of 1964 were likely the best months for Johnson to begin an American withdrawal from Vietnam. Johnson had just won by a large margin in the 1964 election and promised not to get the United States involved in a war in Vietnam, but he still feared what a loss in Vietnam might do to his political agenda. So, Johnson stayed the course in Vietnam and advanced his plan to "win the war." To this effect, Johnson and his staff continued to reject any policy recommendations that did not end in a victory for South Vietnam.[41] In one memo to President Johnson in response to Mansfield's December 9th memorandum, McGeorge Bundy claimed that the administration agreed with Mansfield on the "frugal use of American resources" but concluded "what seems

[40] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson "Developments in Viet Nam" December 9, 1964, "National Security Council reply, and other correspondence with Mike Mansfield, 1964-1965." Lyndon B. Johnson National Security Files, 1963-1969, Name and Speech Files, Name File, ProQuest.
[41] Logevall, *Choosing War*, 253.

frugal to us may seem too much to him."[42] Bundy described the executive policy as a "frugal" use of resources although Johnson had already asked for an expansion to the budget to finance more aid for Vietnam. The White House was already planning its expansion of operations in Vietnam.

Two months later, in February 1965, Mansfield was once again one of the few congressional leaders to oppose the choice to expand the war. Mansfield's first protests began following the Viet Cong attack on the American military billet at Pleiku. Though Johnson had been given the "blank check" in the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, he remained hesitant to use military force in Vietnam. No Americans had been killed during the Gulf of Tonkin incident and there had been few direct attacks on Americans in South Vietnam. Most of Johnson's hesitation came from his desperation not to upset public opinion before the election in 1964. Johnson's attitude toward military action changed following his election and the attack on an American military base near Pleiku that killed eight Americans. After the attack, President Johnson gathered his advisors for a meeting to discuss retaliation. At the meeting, Mansfield protested bombing North Vietnam in retaliation for the attack. He again reminded the president of the position of China and the Soviet Union and their potential involvement in reaction to American intervention.[43] Despite this, the president still decided to retaliate against the North Vietnamese with Operation Flaming Dart. Still frustrated two days after the meeting, Mansfield commented on the lack of security at Pleiku writing:

> There was plenty of opportunity for advance warnings on the Pleiku attack but that the attack when it came was, in effect, a complete surprise. It is especially hard to understand why we were caught off-guard ourselves, in view of the attack of November 1st on our

[42] McGeorge Bundy, Memorandum to President Johnson, "Senator Mansfield's memorandum of December 9" December 16,1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1986, Vol. I, Vietnam, 1964.
[43] William Colby, Memorandum for the Record, February 5, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. II, Vietnam, January-June 1965.

> force at Bien Hoa, 12 miles outside of Saigon. Our own security arrangements were certainly lax there and despite the explanation given at our meeting on Saturday night, it appears to me they were lax a Pleiku.[44]

Mansfield's critique almost implied that either the South Vietnamese or the Americans let the attack on Pleiku happen. He even called General Andrew Goodpaster's explanation for the attack "not convincing." Mansfield's growing distrust of the Johnson Administration was on full display; however, he ended his memorandum with a promise to do whatever he could to aid President Johnson in his "grave responsibility" of managing Vietnam policy. This contrasting set of sentiments reflects his increasingly difficult position within the policy making process.

In a short addendum memorandum on February 10th, which Mansfield may have intended to present during a congressional leadership meeting, Mansfield began his long attempt to bring the United States to the conference table at the United Nation. His goal was to reconvene the nations present at the Geneva Convention of 1954 which split Vietnam in two.[45] Mansfield, who watched his hopes for neutralization fade into obscurity, now turned to a new solution for peace in Vietnam. Although he opposed the bombing of North Vietnam, he viewed it as a method to force the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table. "Indeed" he wrote "if there is to be another retaliation against the North in response to this latest incident, it may be well to try to make it serve the purpose of bringing about the reconvening of such a conference."[46] Mansfield understood that although he could not stop the president from taking retaliatory action, he could advise the president on how to use that action to achieve negotiation. It was ironic that Mansfield

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[44] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson, "Vietnam" February 8, 1965, *FRUS*, Vol. II, Vietnam, January-June 1965.
[45] Lawrence O'Brien, Notes on the Congressional Leadership Meeting, February 10, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1988, Vol. II, Vietnam, January-June 1965, 226.; Mike Mansfield Memorandum to President Johnson, 'Further Observation on Viet Nam" February 10, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. II, Vietnam, January-June 1965, 227.
[46] Manfeild, "Further Observation on Viet Nam."

was championing the same logic that the administration used to justify the sustained bombardment that began in March 1965.

Unbeknownst to Mansfield, the Johnson Administration was preparing to expand the air war. Two key allies of this policy were Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and General Maxwell Taylor, the ambassador to South Vietnam. Many of Johnson's aides had called for increased bombing of North Vietnam since May 1964, but Johnson had delayed the decision due to a lack of international support.[47] However, following the increased number of attacks on American troops in South Vietnam and given the poor morale of the South Vietnamese Army, Johnson finally began to consider a sustained bombardment of North Vietnam. He sought advice from all who would give it, including former President Dwight Eisenhower. Eisenhower echoed much of what Johnson's advisers had already called for. Eisenhower reminded Johnson that Truman attempted to keep the communists back in Korea with naval and air power, but he was forced to use American troops to stop the collapse of South Korea.[48] With Eisenhower's advice and a growing number of attacks on Americans in South Vietnam, Johnson launched Operation Rolling Thunder on March 2, 1965 and introduced American combat troops to Vietnam on March 8, 1965 – The finale to the long march toward the Americanization of the war in Vietnam.

In a disheartened letter to President Johnson, Mansfield again gave the President his opinion on Vietnam, this time in a tone akin to total defeat. Mansfield began with a personal statement, that his singular goal was to give the president whatever help he could offer. Then he wrote about the trend of American policy. Mansfield pointed out that it had been and remained in direct opposition to his suggestions. He then specified that American policy was not the fault of

[47] Logevall, *Choosing War*, 147,152.
[48] General Andrew Goodpaster, "Memorandum of a Meeting with President Johnson" February 17, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. II, Vietnam, January-June 1965, 308.

one individual but the result of bureaucratic momentum. He commented: "I fear that this course, at best, will win us only more widespread difficulties which will play havoc with the domestic program of the Administration."[49] Mansfield reminded Johnson that the situation in Vietnam was headed in a direction that was not his creation but his responsibility to stop. Although Johnson was afraid that "losing" the conflict in Vietnam would adversely affect his ability to pass his domestic agenda, Mansfield deftly pointed out that an unpopular foreign war would have that same effect. He continued his letter with four recommendations with the caveat that he had "no great hope that, at this late date, these suggestions will be useful."[50] Mansfield understood although he recommended a peaceful solution, the President had already made up his mind. Mansfield ended with an observation that the United States had been "in too deep before you [President Johnson] had assumed office" and promised no further memorandum on Vietnam. Mansfield's self-proclaimed final letter to Johnson showed how disappointed he was, not only in the outcome of the Vietnam policy he had helped create but also how his close colleague Lyndon Johnson had ignored his genuine advice.

President Johnson's speech given on April 7, 1965 at Johns Hopkins University, temporarily alleviated Mansfield's disappointment. It renewed optimism in Mansfield and his colleagues in Congress for the president's goals in Vietnam. In his speech, Johnson stressed that his only goal was to stop the aggression from the Viet Cong and called for "unconditional discussion" and claimed that the United States would "never be second in the search for … a peace settlement in Vietnam."[51] Mansfield felt so strongly about the speech that he entered it

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[49] Mike Mansfield, Letter to President Johnson, March 24, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. II, Vietnam, January-June 1965, 479.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Lyndon Johnson, "Peace Without Context," April 7, 1965, Baltimore, Maryland, LBJ Library, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson,* 1965. Volume I, entry 172, pp. 394-399. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1966.

into the Senate record the following day. He praised that, "The President left no doubt that this Nation prefers the course of peace in Asia."[52] Mansfield's positive response showed his enthusiasm for the potential direction of Vietnam policy. He continued to publicly support Johnson, even if his private feelings were still wavering.

It was only three months until Mansfield broke his promise of no more memoranda on Vietnam. He continued his effort to advise Johnson on a peaceful solution and limit the scope of the war in Vietnam. Following a leadership meeting on June 3, 1965, Mansfield described Johnson as "very pessimistic" about the war, a comment that foreshadowed another three memorandums on Vietnam that June.[53] The first dealt directly with the reason for the leadership meeting: the potential bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong Harbor. This memorandum provided the president with a wealth of reasons not to bomb Hanoi or Haiphong, primarily the risk of drawing China and Russia into the conflict and damaging the American image abroad. It was also in this memorandum that Mansfield continued his calls for peace. He described Vietnam as having "no significant American interests" and his desire to "get this whole sorry business to a conference table as soon as possible."[54] In his next memorandum to Johnson on the June 9, 1965 following a phone call with the president, Mansfield wrote to request clarification on U.S. policy in Vietnam. Mansfield recommended that Johnson shore up his policy position on Vietnam because the questions about why the United States was in Vietnam would start to fly from all directions. Mansfield included a call for peace in Vietnam, which became so routine he just simply wrote, "you know my personal view." Finally, Mansfield warned President Johnson not to seek another

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[52] Senator Mansfield, "President Johnson's speech on Southeast Asia-Vietnam" April 9, 1965, 89th Congress, 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* 111, 7492.
[53] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum of Senator Mike Mansfield, June 3, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol II. January-June 1965.
[54] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson, "Viet Nam," June 5, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol II. January-June 1965.

Gulf of Tonkin-like resolution due to the potential for a criticism from the growing anti-war faction in Congress. He also reminded Johnson that a new resolution would have no effect on his powers as Commander-in-Chief.[55] Mansfield's last memorandum that June was a short recommendation to seek a peace conference and bring the conflict in Vietnam to a close.[56] Though the memorandum was short it exemplified of Mansfield's continued commitment to a peaceful solution in Vietnam.

In response to the June memoranda, McGeorge Bundy authored a memo that fulfilled Mansfield's request for a summary of the White House's position on Vietnam. The general tone of implied Bundy was trying to placate the majority leader. At the same time, he did not shy away from pointing out his disagreements with Mansfield's claims. Bundy's two main points of contention concerned the evaluation of the political situation in Vietnam. He described Mansfield's evaluation as, "unduly pessimistic" and criticized the claim that a ceasefire between north and south could be facilitated.[57] Outside of those two main issues, Bundy assured Mansfield that much of his thinking was in line with the administration and that the situation in Vietnam was "under constant study in the administration."[58] Bundy tried to convince Mansfield that the administration's policy was in line with his views and that his concerns were being heard. Although such concerns with Vietnam were heard they were outnumbered by the voices within the Johnson Administration that called for a greater commitment to the war rather than a

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[55] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum of Senator Mike Mansfield, "Viet Nam" June 9, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol II. January-June 1965.
[56] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson, "Suggestions on the Vietnamese Situation", June 14, 1965, National Security Council reply, and other correspondence with Mike Mansfield, 1964-1965, Lyndon B. Johnson National Security Files, 1963-1969, Name and Speech Files, Name File, Vietnam, Mansfield Memo and Reply, ProQuest.
[57] McGeorge Bundy, Memorandum to Senator Mansfield, June 29, 1965, National Security Council reply, and other correspondence with Mike Mansfield, 1964-1965, Lyndon B. Johnson National Security Files, 1963-1969, Name and Speech Files, Name File, Vietnam, Mansfield Memo and Reply, ProQuest.
[58] Ibid.

concerted effort for peaceful negotiations. Mansfield continued his protest against Americanization of the war in private dialogue with Johnson and was constantly ignored, but it was not Mansfield's continuous private protest that became the primary thorn in the side of the Johnson administration's handling of Vietnam.

Mansfield may have failed in his attempt to stop the Americanization of the war; he did not end his crusade to bring peace to Vietnam. Following the introduction of American troops, he began a concerted effort to bring the United States and South Vietnam to the conference table to end the conflict. Mansfield's journey from a supporter of Vietnam to its highest-ranking opponent was due to the Kennedy administration's choice to allow the coup of Diem – a choice Mansfield viewed as detrimental to any potential for an independent South Vietnam. Following Diem's death, the Senate majority leader began his pursuit of an alternate solution to the conflict in Vietnam. Mansfield's reluctance to publicly break with Kennedy or Johnson reflected his respect for both men and the leader of his party. He also understood as a Democratic leader he could not publicly oppose a friendly executive's policy lest it damage the image of party unity.

Section 2: Fulbright, Peace's White Knight

Until June 1965, much of the congressional opposition to the war in Vietnam had come from Mansfield in the form of private protests via memorandum or letter. With Mansfield in the opposition camp, President's Johnson searched for a new Democratic champion of Vietnam in the Senate, he instead found his soon to be greatest public opponent, J. William Fulbright.

By 1964, Fulbright was one of the chiefs of congressional foreign policymaking, having served on the SFRC for nearly fifteen years and as chairman since 1959. As chairman he was in

prime position to influence President Johnson's foreign policy. Fulbright initially supported President Johnson and his crusade against communism in Southeast Asia, but Fulbright was primed to become Johnson's opponent. Fulbright was a classic Southern Democrat, and a signatory of the 1956 *Southern Manifesto*, a Southern counter to the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, in opposition to the integration of public spaces. He was a supporter of segregation and, took part in the Southern filibuster of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Fulbright opposed most of President Johnson's domestic reforms and, voted against every piece of civil rights legislation. Fulbright's opposition to Johnson's domestic agenda primed him for opposition in the foreign policy sphere.

Although Fulbright was a major player in American foreign policy, much of his expertise was Euro-centric, which left him unprepared for the situation in Vietnam.[59] Until the Gulf of Tonkin incident, Fulbright publicly commented little about Vietnam. His first comments on the subject came in 1961 when he described President Kennedy's aid to Vietnam as a "qualified success."[60] Fulbright's next comment came during the Southern filibuster of the Civil Rights Act in his speech, "Old Myths and New Realities." In this speech Fulbright briefly mentioned Vietnam and the need to reevaluate the American position. He largely supported the Johnson administration's assistance of the South Vietnamese when he said, "we have no choice but to support the South Vietnamese Government and Army by the most effective means available."[61] Fulbright took much the same line as the administration: The United States was obligated to support South Vietnam in opposition to communist aggression. When the Gulf of Tonkin

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[59] Randall Woods, *Fulbright: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 74.
[60] J. William Fulbright, "Some Reflection Upon Recent Events and Continuing Problems", 87th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* 107 (June 29, 1961), 11702.
[61] J. William Fulbright, "Old Myths and New Realties" 88th Cong. 2nd Sess., *Congressional Record* 110 (March 25, 1964), 6232.

Resolution came to the Senate floor Fulbright supported it and called for, "the prompt and overwhelming endorsement of the resolution now before the Senate."[62] Fulbright, like his Senate colleague Mansfield, greatly respected President Johnson and thought he was prepared to seek peace in Vietnam.

Yet as American involvement increased, Fulbright's expanding knowledge of Vietnam led him in more critical directions. Still not entirely against the war, he began to see the risks of the current policy. During a congressional leadership meeting, Fulbright asked Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk about the issue of war with China.[63] Fulbright, who had so quickly supported the Tonkin resolution began to see how the war in Vietnam could escalate. This was now especially the case in light of the increased American air raids on North Vietnam that had just taken place in response to the attack on Pleiku. Other Congressmen who had already spoken out included Senators Ernest Gruening and Wayne Morse, the only two dissenting votes against the Tonkin resolution, as well as Senators Al Gore Sr., Frank Church, John Sherman Cooper, and George McGovern. Unfortunately, the growing congressional opposition to the war had little effect on the consensus in the Johnson Administration that escalation was the course that could win the war in Vietnam. But the congressional drift began to chip into the president's base of support. By the summer of 1965 Fulbright realized that there would be no victory in Vietnam worth the cost it would incur. When President Johnson asked him to give a speech to the Senate on Vietnam, Fulbright did what was requested and simply gave his honest interpretation of the conflict.[64]

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[62] J. William Fulbright, speaking on H.J.Res. 1145, on August 4, 1964, 88th Cong. 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* 110, 18399.
[63] Lawrence O'Brien, "Notes on the Congressional Leadership Meeting", February 10, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1988, Vol. II, Vietnam, January-June 1965, 225.
[64] Woods, *Fulbright*, 371.

Fulbright's speech on the Senate floor was by no means an anti-war speech. Fulbright simply supplied his understanding and assessment about the situation in Vietnam. He opposed American withdrawal on the grounds of American obligation but also opposed escalation, because it invited "intervention- or infiltration…in turn would probably draw the United States into a bloody protracted jungle war."[65] Fulbright praised the president's efforts to hold a conference via the United Nations and his work toward settling the issue in Vietnam. Fulbright even went so far as to condemn the press and their focus on the bombing of Vietnam rather than focusing on Johnson's efforts to find a peaceful solution. Although Fulbright's speech was not directly anti-war and certainly took a pro-Johnson tack, Fulbright did take a stance opposed to further American escalation, a choice that, in Johnson's eyes, put him squarely in the opposition camp.[66] Johnson turned on Fulbright. The president never invited Fulbright to another congressional leadership meeting on Vietnam. Fulbright, who to this point like Mansfield kept his dissent private, was left with only one option, take his opposition public.

Fulbright was by no means the first Senators to be a public opponent of the war. The difference between Fulbright and his colleagues that brought such ire from Johnson was that Fulbright's opposition could not be as easily dismissed as his colleagues. Few could accuse Fulbright of being "soft on communism" or dismiss him as a peace-minded progressive.[67] Fulbright's position and esteem in the Senate as a foreign policy expert meant his dissent was difficult for the president to ignore and added a level of authenticity to the opposition that it had not possessed before.

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[65] J. William Fulbright, "The War in Vietnam" 89th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* 111 (June 15, 1965), 13656.
[66] Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam*, 151.
[67] Woods, *Fulbright*, 375.

July 1965 was central to both the long-term American escalation in Vietnam and the development of the anti-war movement in Congress. Late in June following a trip to Vietnam, McNamara authored a memorandum sent to Johnson on July 1, 1965 requesting some 100,000 men.[68] This memorandum greatly expanded the Americanization of the war and was the final straw for many opponents who had long stifled their objections on the issue of Vietnam. On July 21, 1965 President Johnson met with his advisors to discuss the troop increase. At the meeting, the president's questions to his staff indicated his growing anxiety about Vietnam.[69] While Johnson and his staff ruminated on Vietnam, Mansfield broke his long, public silence on Vietnam with a speech on the Senate floor. In his speech Mansfield relayed the rumors of troop increases and intensification of American presence in Vietnam, and included a warning: "We are not in for a summer of pain and difficulty but for an ordeal of indefinite duration and increasing sacrifice…"[70] Mansfield then turned, as he had in his memorandums to Johnson, to the use of a Geneva conference to bring peace to Southeast Asia. His final statement, "the old saying 'better late than never' applies here."[71] Mansfield's public break from the Johnson Administration, although more directly in opposition to Johnson than Fulbright's speech, did not earn him Johnson's scorn. Mansfield's position as Majority leader, his expertise on Asia, and his relationship with Johnson all likely shielded him from removal from leadership.

Mansfield used his shielded position to play both sides of the debate on Vietnam. Johnson needed Mansfield to pass his domestic legislation and could not afford to alienate his

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[68] Robert McNamara, Memorandum from Secretary of Defense McNamara to President Johnson "Program of Expanded Military and political moves with respect to Vietnam," July 1, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. III, Vietnam, June-December 1965.
[69] Jack Valenti, "Notes on a Meeting" July 21, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. III, Vietnam, June-December 1965.
[70] Mike Mansfield, "The Situation in Vietnam," 89th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* 111 (July 21, 1965), 17797-17798.
[71] Ibid.

greatest ally in Congress over opposition to Vietnam policy. The week following his speech, in a joint congressional leadership meeting, Mansfield promised Johnson his support "as a Senator and as Majority Leader."[72] That same day, July 27, 1965, having just promised Johnson his support, Mansfield met with Senators Russell, Fulbright, Aiken, Sparkman, and Cooper. Together they laid out a 19-point memorandum to President Johnson on their opposition to the escalation in Vietnam. The memo ended with the statement, "there was full agreement that insofar as Viet Nam is concerned, we are deeply enmeshed in a place where we ought not to be; that the situation is rapidly going out of control; and that every effort should be made to extricate ourselves."[73] This meeting laid the groundwork for the congressional opposition to Vietnam that Johnson could not ignore. Nevertheless, the next day, President Johnson announced, in a press conference, that the United States would raise its, "fighting strength from 75,000 to 125,000 men almost immediately."[74] It was decided, Vietnam was an American war, and those opposed to the war had to find new ways to stop it.

Mansfield's reaction was to simply shift his argument from stopping escalation to a full push for the earliest possible conference to begin the peace process. On August 30, 1965 Mansfield expressed, to Congress, the need to end the Vietnam Conflict at the conference table rather than on the battlefield. In the speech he commended the Johnson administration's attempts to seek peace.[75] Mansfield continued his support for peace talks the following day in a speech

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[72] McGeorge Bundy, "Notes on Joint Congressional Leadership Meeting," July 27, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. III, Vietnam, June-December 1965.
[73] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson, "Meeting on Vietnam," July 27, 1965, Correspondence with Mike Mansfield, 1966-1967, Lyndon B. Johnson National Security Files, 1963-1969, Name and Speech Files, Name File, Senator Mansfield [1966-1967], ProQuest.
[74] Lyndon Johnson, Press Conference, July 28, 1965, The American Presidency Project.
[75] Mike Mansfield, "Vietnamese War must End at the Conference Table Sooner or Later," 89th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* 111 (August 30, 1965), 22206.

that pointed out the need for the Vietnamese to solve their conflict through democratic means.[76] In both speeches, Mansfield acted on behalf of the administration to help lay the groundwork for a peace process.[77] Mansfield continued to adapt to the political environment. If he could not affect military policy, he would lead the charge for peace.

The remainder of Mansfield's 1965 was spent lobbying for and participating in another trip to Southeast Asia.[78] Mansfield's trip to Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam was his fifth on behalf of the United States government. Following his trip, Mansfield authored his report to the SFRC, a summary of which he sent to President Johnson upon his return. In his summary, Mansfield portrayed the situation as dire and in the worst state that he had seen. He wrote, "The end of the road on the basis of present policy is not in sight either in the sense of a military solution or a solution by negotiations."[79] After Mansfield experienced the situation firsthand, he recognized his solution, via negotiations, was unlikely to materialize. However, Mansfield still opposed the continued increase of American troops. He ended his memorandum with:

> This is a conflict in which all the choices open to us are bad choices. We stand to lose in Viet Nam by restraint; but we stand to lose far more at home and throughout the world by the more extensive military pursuit of an elusive objective in Viet Nam.[80]

Mansfield continued to use Johnson's personal fear of political relegation to leverage his position on Vietnam. The memorandum was another warning to the president that escalation in Vietnam may have adverse effects on his political image at home and the nation's reputation abroad.

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[76] Mike Mansfield, "Vietnam: Narrowing the Issues," 89th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* 111 (September 01, 1965), 22560-22561.
[77] Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam*, 164.
[78] Ibid, 165.
[79] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to the President, "Summary of Conclusions of the Report on Vietnam," December 18, 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. III, Vietnam, June-December 1965.
[80] Ibid

Mansfield made many of the same claims in his report to the SFRC that he did in his summary report to Johnson but did not use the dismal tone he took in his summary to Johnson. Much of the report simply served as an explanation of the military, economic and political situation in Vietnam. Much of Mansfield's report pointed out the issues with increased American troops in Vietnam. Although, he did acquiesce that the U.S. presence brought a much-needed level of stability to the Vietnamese government. Mansfield's report was a key tool that helped prepare the SFRC for the televised hearings on Johnson's request for $400 million in supplemental foreign aid for use in Vietnam.

When Fulbright called hearings on Vietnam in January 1966, he finally brought the Vietnam debate into the public eye. Until 1966, many of the hearings associated with Vietnam were in closed sessions. Then beginning with Secretary of State Dean Rusk's testimony on January 28, 1966 many of the hearings were televised. Fulbright was driven to hold the hearings primarily because he had been kicked out of the private administration decision-making apparatus. Fulbright did not hold a position like Mansfield's that forced the Democrats in the White House to at least feign attention to his ideas. Thus, Fulbright leveraged his position as Chairman of the SFRC, a role the Johnson and his staff vastly underestimated and one that sparked the public discourse on Vietnam. Fulbright's goal in holding the hearings was to educate the American people and not to stop the war. He did not call for an immediate end to the war or an American withdrawal, but much like Mansfield wanted a return to the 1954 Geneva conference and a democratic end to the war via elections.[81] The hearings became a national sensation and Fulbright's choice to televise the hearings helped expand their impact. The

[81] Woods, *Fulbright*, 408.

hearings exposed more Americans to the beginnings of the credibility gap that only expanded throughout the conflict.

Much to Fulbright's chagrin, the hearings did not have the effect he wanted. Soon after the hearings concluded Senator Wayne Morse made a motion to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. This vote revealed the position of the Senate regarding the ongoing conflict in Vietnam. The potential for the vote compelled President Johnson to phone Mansfield on the issue. During the call, Johnson requested that Mansfield make a motion to table Morse's call for repeal. Johnson encouraged Mansfield to vote his conscience on the issue, but the president reminded Mansfield that with or without the Tonkin resolution, "I believe I have unquestioned authority as Commander in Chief."[82] Johnson's primary worry was that the press would interpret votes to repeal the resolution as limitations on his authority. Later that day the motion to table Morse's amendment passed 92-5, with Mansfield voting to table and Fulbright against. [83] The vote showed that the Senate was still voting in overwhelming support of the president on his Vietnam policy. Mansfield and Fulbright's votes on tabling the motion to repeal the resolution also demonstrated that they were increasingly divergent in their methods of bringing an end to the conflict.

Later in March 1966, Fulbright authored a short memorandum to the president. He proposed the use of neutralization of Vietnam and, revealed that the senators opposed to Vietnam were not working together. Unlike Mansfield, Fulbright did not know that this avenue had already long been rejected by the administration. Fulbright was so enthralled with neutralization that he continued to lobby for its use into the summer in a second memo on neutralization

[82] Telephone conversation between President Johnson and Senator Mike Mansfield, March 1, 1966, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, Vol. IV, Vietnam, 1966.
[83] *Congressional Record*, March 1, 1966, 89th Cong., 2nd Sess., Vol.112, 4404.

authored on June 6,1966. At the same time, President Johnson requested Mansfield comment on potential policies in Vietnam. On June 10, 1966, during a phone call about Vietnam with Johnson, when Mansfield was queried about the situation he responded, "I'm not happy about it anymore than you are."[84] Three days later Mansfield voiced his opinion on the state of American policy in Vietnam in response to a list of policy alternatives that Johnson sent him. The list that Johnson sent Mansfield contained five policies: I) total American withdrawal; II) an "enclave" strategy of concentrating U.S. military power in select areas of South Vietnam; III) following the present course; IV) major American escalation of ground and air forces; V) maximum non-nuclear effort, North and South.[85] In his response to Johnson, Mansfield immediately ruled out options I, IV, and V. He cited them as "neither…practical or responsible courses of action in Viet Nam."[86] Mansfield likely ruled out total withdrawal because he wanted to appease Johnson. He knew that Johnson, no matter how hard he tried, would never accept total American withdrawal as an option. Mansfield then turned to the "enclave" strategy and the "present course" strategy. He criticized the "present course" strategy for its lack of clarity on what the "present course" was. He described the real situation as "rapidly expanding US involvement" which would "be indistinguishable from Alternative IV before too long and not long thereafter Alternative V." [87] It was clear that Mansfield strongly favored the "enclave" strategy. He never clearly stated his preference and only reminded President Johnson that the United States should follow a course that "limits the military involvement as far as possible

[84] Telephone Conversation between President Johns and Senator Mike Mansfield, June 10, 1966, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, Vol. IV, Vietnam, 1966.
[85] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson, "Comment of Five Suggested Alternatives of Policy in Viet Nam, June 13, 1966, Correspondence with Mike Mansfield, 1966-1967, Lyndon B. Johnson National Security Files, 1963-1969, Name and Speech Files, Name File, Senator Mansfield [1966-1967], ProQuest History Vault.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

while placing the emphasis on seeking negotiations."[88] Mansfield's position remained unchanged, a complete opposition to escalation and push for negotiations.

Though Johnson requested Mansfield's opinion on Vietnam the policy alternatives, he still chose to have his staff respond to Mansfield's comments. In a response to Mansfield, drafted by the new National Security Advisor, Walt Rostow for President Johnson, he compared the situation in Vietnam to World War II and Korea with U.S. policy being to maintain a peaceful and free world. Johnson also criticized Mansfield's argument about the "present course" when he wrote: "Our present course is not an open-ended commitment to steadily increasing focus and exercise of power. It is measured by the needs we face and by the actions of the enemy."[89] Johnson's rebuttal to Mansfield demonstrates his continued commitment to South Vietnam at almost any cost, and his refusal to seriously consider any options counter to the administration's existing policy.

In a response to Johnson's letter, Mansfield expressed, to Johnson, his frustration with tired historical analogies and the implied equivalence of Vietnam and World War II. Mansfield rejected Johnson's use of historical analogies because they missed the minutiae of the issue, an ironic criticism given Mansfield's early arguments against Vietnam that included many comparisons to the Korean War. Mansfield then reminded President Johnson that the only national interests that should matter in his considerations about involvement in Vietnam were American interests. Mansfield closed his memo with a recommendation for the president, "face up" to the reality that Vietnam will be a long and that it will have consequences at home. He

[88] Ibid.
[89] Lyndon Johnson, President Johnson Letter to Mike Mansfield, June 22, 1966, Correspondence with Mike Mansfield, 1966-1967, Lyndon B. Johnson National Security Files, 1963-1969, Name and Speech Files, Name File, Senator Mansfield [1966-1967], ProQuest History Vault.

closed with affirmation of his support for Johnson. For Mansfield, his opposition to the war became a concerted effort to not only save American lives but to save his party's agenda. Both Johnson and Mansfield viewed the Great Society as inextricably linked to Vietnam. Johnson, as he expressed years earlier, was fearful of losing his "effectiveness." Mansfield, conversely, understood and stressed that the more lives, resources, and time were wasted in Vietnam, the more damage was done to Johnson and thus the Democratic Party's ability to pass and fund the sweeping reforms they had planned.

Fulbright, cast out of the policymaking apparatus, turned to new methods of influencing the president. He chose to educate the public on the issues with Vietnam and the foreign policy process. For much of 1966, he struggled against the Johnson Administration to grow the credibility gap. Fulbright conducted a lecture series at Johns Hopkins University, a series that served to enlighten attendees of the danger of American self-perception. In his series, titled "The Arrogance of Power," collected and published under the same name at the end of the 1965, Fulbright examined the issues with the American foreign policy apparatus, its effect on Vietnam, and laid forth his alternate policy to end the conflict in Vietnam.

However, Fulbright did not begin his opposition by diving into the geopolitical machinations of the American foreign policy apparatus but instead showed that the arrogance of Americans had permeated all levels of society by examining the behavior of Americans abroad. He compared the "hospitable and considerate" image that foreigners have of Americans when they visit the United States, with the noisy and demanding attitude that Americans have abroad. Fulbright claimed that Americans "act as though 'they own the place' because they very nearly do." He cited the domination of American companies abroad and the vast swaths of nations with

American soldiers stationed within their borders or nations that relied on the United States for their own security as the cause for American arrogance.[90]

Following his critique of Americans abroad, Fulbright lectured about how this attitude affected Americans in their conduct of international affairs. Fulbright's premise was that the very nature of American foreign policy making was corrupted by arrogance. His claim implied that the systemic issue with American foreign policy was to blame for the issues in Vietnam, a claim similar to Mansfield's argument that the Kennedy Administration had inflated the importance of Vietnam through its own rhetoric. It was in his critique that Fulbright, questioned the ability of Western nations, particularly the United States, to "create stability where there is chaos, the will to fight where there is defeatism, democracy where there is not tradition of it, and honest government where corruption is almost a way of life."[91] Although Fulbright's assessment held racial overtones, the fact was that the American commitment to Vietnam was increasingly about American pride rather than freedom for the South Vietnamese.

Fulbright's argument against the war in Vietnam was rooted in his belief that the United States should not be involved in what he saw as a civil war, where a nationalist party was opposed by a government propped up by a foreign power. He argued that the interests of the United States were best served by supporting nationalism abroad but when nationalism was mixed with communism the United States devolved into "unseemly panic" with the single exception of post-war Yugoslavia.[92] Fulbright then applied the same lens to the situation in Vietnam where the United States had once more devolved into this "panic" about the spread of communism. Fulbright accurately pointed out that the origins of the Vietnamese communist

[90] J. William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York: Random House, 1966), 9-10.
[91] Ibid, 15.
[92] Ibid, 77-78.

party were inherently nationalist. Ho Chi Minh was not and never had been an agent of Communist China like the Johnson Administration had claimed. Fulbright called Vietnamese communism, "a potential bulwark - perhaps the only bulwark - against Chinese communism."[93] Fulbright understood that the solution to Vietnam was not to prop up a puppet government. Instead, he argued for support of nationalists whom he believed could be used as a bulwark against the Chinese.

Fulbright's closing argument on Vietnam and his policy alternative exposed the fact that he held much the same views as his Senate colleague Mansfield. Fulbright's "eight-point program" included: 1) negotiations with North Vietnam and the NLF; 2) a US bombing halt; 3) a ceasefire between all belligerent; 4) American withdrawal; 5) self-determination for South; 6) Vietnam; 7) eventual reunification of North and South Vietnam; 8) an international conference to ensure all the existing conditions; 9) if all else fails the United States should consolidate its forces in highly defensible areas of South Vietnam.[94] All elements of Fulbright's program perfectly aligned with elements of Mansfield's views.

Section 3: Two Sides of One Coin

The reality that both Mansfield and Fulbright held nearly identical views exposed that the real difference between them were their methods of opposition. Their different approaches were the cause of position within the structure of the Democratic Party and their relationships with Johnson. This difference forced both men to take opposite approaches influencing Vietnam policy. Fulbright, unhindered by party position, publicly brandished the issues with Johnson's

[93] Ibid, 114.
[94] Ibid, 188-196.

policy. Contrasted with Mansfield, willingly in lockstep as the majority leader, the public advocate of the war, privately lobbied Johnson to end the conflict.

While Fulbright was exposing the American public to policy alternatives, Mansfield continued his private opposition to the war at times clashing with Fulbright in defense of the president. One episode occurred on August 29, 1966, when Mansfield took the occasion of French President De Gaulle's trip to Cambodia to call for peace talks in Vietnam. Following Mansfield's short speech, Fulbright used the opportunity to scrutinize the president's conditions for negotiation: "I know he [President Johnson] has explored all avenues…. But this peace offense is always reduced to… 'the other side must stop doing what it is doing.'" Fulbright was of course pointing out the Johnson Administration's near refusal to work toward a peace conference with the North Vietnamese. Mansfield, who shared Fulbright's frustration with the lack of peace talks, responded with the fourteen points that the Johnson Administration had proposed for negotiation at a conference, thereby publicly defending the White House's policies on Vietnam. Fulbright and Mansfield's exchange exemplified how their different positions within the Democratic Party hierarchy led them to opposite sides of an argument despite holding many of the same beliefs.

Fulbright's criticism of the administration and his short debate with Mansfield likely influenced the majority leader, who authored another memorandum to President Johnson in mid-October 1966. In his memorandum Mansfield gave Johnson four suggestions, reminiscent of Fulbright's "eight-point program" to help bring about negotiations: 1) prepare for a bombing halt, 2) prepare for a "hold-fire," 3) prepare for a unilateral withdrawal of 30,000 American

troops, 4) and participation of the Viet Cong in negotiations.[95] Mansfield, who stood up for the president on the Senate floor, was once more called for the president to keep to his word and prepare for peace negotiations. However, the president still refused to look for peace. In his response to Mansfield he wrote, "Our objectives are identical: to de-escalate the conflict to get into negotiations, to achieve an honorable peace at the earliest possible moment."[96] Johnson's implication that both men had "identical" goals was incorrect. Mansfield's goal was not to prop up a South Vietnamese government but bring peace back to Southeast Asia and not on the conditional basis that the administration demanded. Where they agreed was in the need to preserve Democratic unity in the face of growing unrest across the country and within the party. This common goal united them against Fulbright, despite the fact that Mansfield privately agreed with many of the Arkansan's criticisms.

As 1966 ended, it became increasingly clear to Mansfield that the White House was not listening to him. 1967 was the year that he finally began to publicly air some of his criticism of Vietnam. But Mansfield never gave up on Johnson and stayed loyal to his old friend until the bitter end. In the early months of that year, Mansfield continued his private communication with Johnson. One memorandum, from January 6, 1967, showed Mansfield continued his effort to push the president to the conference table. He advised Johnson to review one of his

[95] Mike Mansfield, Letter to President Johnson, October 13, 1966, "National defense files, including economic strategies to defeat communism, and Vietnam War settlement" Johnson administration's Response to Anti-Vietnam War Activities, Part 2: White House Central Files, ND [National Security – Defense], ND 19/CO 312, November 13-25, 1966, ProQuest History Vault.
[96] Lyndon Johnson, Letter to Senator Mansfield, November 19, 1966, in ibid.

memorandums from June 1965. His comment, "it may still be pertinent," revealed Mansfield's attitude that not much had changed over the year and a half since the memo was sent.[97]

Mansfield continued his track record of mixed public comments in March 1967 when he criticized the policies in Vietnam during an address at the University of North Carolina. In his speech, Mansfield explained the scale of the conflict. He again compared Vietnam with Korea and commented on the irony of the United States' repetition of fighting a "devastating war on the borders of China…with people who have had no tradition of hostility towards the United States and who have far more historic reason than do we for mutual hostility with the Chinese."[98] Mansfield's speech, almost identical to Fulbright observations in *Arrogance of Power* on the nature of Vietnam's historical relationship with China, reflected his belief that the United States was embroiled in folly and that a unified Vietnam could be a bulwark against Communist China.

Mansfield's direct critique of the Vietnam policy began when he started to point out the realities of the war. Mansfield described Vietnam as "a more difficult and dangerous war than Korea…. A war whose end is not yet in sight, by military action or by negotiated diplomatic solution."[99] Mansfield's commentary on the resolution of the conflict was in direct opposition to the administration's soon to be coined catchphrase "light at the end of the tunnel." However, Mansfield's support for Johnson was clear when he said, "President Johnson wants this war ended in an honorable peace and every Senator I know, and I know them all, wants the same thing."[100] Mansfield's continued deference to the administration and particularly his respect for

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[97] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson, January 6, 1967, Correspondence with Mike Mansfield, 1966-1967, Lyndon B. Johnson National Security Files, 1963-1969, Name and Speech Files, Name File, Senator Mansfield [1966-1967], ProQuest.
[98] Mike Mansfield, Address at the University of North Carolina, "Central Concerns of American Foreign Policy," March 13, 1967, Correspondence with Mike Mansfield, 1966-1967, Lyndon B. Johnson National Security Files, 1963-1969, Name and Speech Files, Name File, Senator Mansfield [1966-1967], ProQuest
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

the president led him to try to speak out and explain the realities of the war while defending the president in the process.

Even if Mansfield was now seemingly taking an opposition stance, he continued to give his advice to the president. In late April 1967 he once more sent Johnson a memorandum on the situation in Vietnam. In this memorandum, dated April 29, 1967, Mansfield still called for peace but took a slightly more bellicose tone than before. While the first two sections of his memorandum both called for solicitation of a peace conference from China and the UN, the last section suggested a military solution to the problem of the Ho Chi Minh trail. The solution that Mansfield gave to the president was a "border barricade" from the South China Sea through Laos and up to the Thai-Laotian border. Mansfield pointed out that the barricade would decrease the flow of men and equipment to the Viet Cong. He knew the barricade would require more men, he wrote "manpower increases are going to occur regardless."[101] Mansfield's dry reference to Johnson's choice to increase American involvement in Vietnam was the first time he did not directly oppose the increase of troops. Mansfield also pointed out that the creation of a border barricade made bombing unnecessary. He cited the combination of the difficulty sending supplies to the south and a bombing halt as factors that increased the North's probability of coming to the conference table. Mansfield's border suggestion, although serious, almost seemed to be an intentionally ridiculous proposition in order to convey to President Johnson the absurdity of the conflict.

Mansfield closed this memorandum with a personal anecdote in an attempt to convince Johnson to listen to him on Vietnam. Mansfield wrote,

[101] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson, April 29,1967, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol V., Vietnam, 1967.

> You may recall that when you were the Majority Leader and I was your Deputy sitting next to you, that on occasion I would lean over and tug at the back of your coat to signal that it was either time to close the debate or to sit down. Most of the time but not all the time you would do what I was trying to suggest. Since you have been President I have been figuratively tugging at your coat, now and again, and the only purpose has been to be helpful and constructive. I am sure that every suggestion I have made has been given consideration by you and I appreciate their courteous consideration. One last word—in my personal opinion, the hour is growing very, very late.[102]

The inclusion of Mansfield's personal anecdote about Johnson was the first of its kind in any of his correspondence and showed his growing concern about, not only the situation in Vietnam but his friend. Mansfield tugged at Johnson's coat to leave Vietnam for almost three years and was ignored every time. Mansfield, ever the diplomat, reminded Johnson again, as he had done so many times, that his advice was always in good faith Mansfield had only ever wanted what was best for the United States. Mansfield pointed out, the situation in Vietnam was deteriorating and it was long past any point of return but once more as a friend and colleague Mansfield tugged at Johnson to save himself and his nation from the quagmire, and find a way out.

While Mansfield was writing to Johnson about the war, Fulbright set his sights on growing the opposition to the war. At the beginning of 1967, Fulbright had the opportunity to talk to Johnson over the phone about Vietnam. In classic Johnson fashion, he dominated much of the conversation on Vietnam. Much of what Johnson said was placating Fulbright by explaining how continued American action would lead to the elections that Fulbright recommended in *Arrogance of Power*. Johnson claimed that the Vietnamese were on the verge of a conference and just wanted it to look like the hawks were winning the debate on Vietnam. Johnson asked Fulbright "Don't get into a debate with them [hawks]…You can't answer them."[103] Johnson believed that if the hawks appeared to be commanding American policy,

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[102] Ibid.
[103] Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Senator J. William Fulbright, January 20, 1967, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol V., Vietnam, 1967.

more than he, then he could convince the North Vietnamese to sit down at the conference table and even set up an election in Vietnam. Fulbright quietly listened to Johnson and at the end of Johnson's diatribe Fulbright expressed his growing disgust with the situation: "No, that is awful bad. It's so God damned bad that it has to be a military operation."[104] Fulbright's vulgar response to Johnson's proposed solutions showed just how frustrated he was with the situation in Vietnam. Fulbright's response expressed his growing frustration with his situation. He was committed to getting the United States out of Vietnam, but he also faced pressure from Johnson to keep his protests and conflict with hawks limited.

Fulbright did not give in to the president's request but instead chose to combat the hawks on Vietnam during the debate for the 1967 appropriations bill. Fulbright's main attack was aimed at Senator Richard Russell, a close ally to Johnson and Chairman of the Armed Services Committee. Mansfield sat passively while Fulbright debated with Russell over Vietnam. Fulbright's debate was sparked by Senator Joseph Clark's proposed amendment to limit the American troop count to 500,000 men without a declaration of war. In his attacks, Fulbright pushed Russell on the constitutionality of the conflict in Vietnam, and the potential for a declaration of war. He asked, "Does the Senator [Russell] believe that this resolution can stand constitutionally as a substitute for a congressional declaration of war."[105] To which Russell responded, "I think it amounts to a congressional approval of a state of war, if not a formal declaration of war."[106] Fulbright's heated debate with Russell, was not an attempt to bring the United States into a state of declared war with North Vietnam, but an attempt to expose the administration's circumvention of the foreign policy process, and Congress' constitutional

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[104] Ibid.
[105] *Congressional Record*, February 28, 1967, 90th Cong., 1st sess., Vol113, 4720.
[106] Ibid, 4721.

powers.[107] Fulbright closed the debate with his admission, "The senator from Arkansas – being a simple Ozark hillbilly – would like to see this war stopped on an honorable basis."[108] Fulbright once more reiterated that the goal in his opposition was not a heady geopolitical scheme or a masterful foreign policy coup but a simple plea from a simple man to end a mistaken war in Vietnam.

Fulbright continued his opposition for the remainder of the1967. He became particularly combative when General William Westmoreland addressed the Congress in late April. All the while, his Senate colleague, Mansfield, continued his defense of the administration's position. Mansfield went so far on as to join with Republican Minority Leader, Everett Dirksen in debate of Senator Clifford Case, and his claims that Johnson's actions caused a "crisis of confidence."[109] Mansfield in response to Senator Case's claim. Senator Case proposed that the president had taken advantage of the Congress via the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. Mansfield responded that no member of Congress knew how the resolution would be used and that the Congress should not point fingers but help the president find a solution to the conflict. Finally, Mansfield reassured his Senate colleagues, "that any proposal made by any Senator, on or off the floor, has been given consideration by the administration."[110] Mansfield's reassurance, although not hyperbole, was an overstatement. The Johnson Administration reviewed a multitude of policy alternatives including Mansfield's, but Johnson was dead set on his initial policy to "win the war," and did not seriously consider many alternatives.

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[107] Woods, *Fulbright*, 443.
[108] *Congressional Record*, February 28, 1967 90th Cong., 1st sess., Vol. 113, 4727.
[109] *Congressional Record*, September 26, 1967, 90th Cong., 1st sess., Vol. 113, 26699.
[110] Ibid, 26703.

One of the alternatives Mansfield still advocated for was the use of the United Nations (UN) to settle the issue in Vietnam. Once more, in early October 1967 he wrote to Johnson to sue for peace. Mansfield told the president that a growing number of senators were in support of the choice to employ the UN to end the conflict.[111] He reminded Johnson that there was no losing option when proposing a peace conference at the UN, it only showed "who is and who is not willing to being the UN into the effort to restore peace in Viet Nam."[112] Mansfield understood the political consequences that the war had on Johnson and the Democratic Party, and thus suggested face-saving actions like proposing peace at the UN, even if it did not materialize. However, as the war continued the Johnson's staff increasingly associated Mansfield with Fulbright, an association that only damaged his already weak position of influence on the Vietnam issue.

The start of 1968 brought with it the end of an era, the Tet offensive finally exposed the reality of Vietnam to the American public, which hurt the Johnson administration's credibility. 1968 also marked the administration's almost complete rejection of Mansfield from the foreign policy process. Although Johnson listened to him, he listened, then ignored him. Mansfield was increasingly lumped together with his Senate counterpart Fulbright, as a dove whose opinion never aligned with the administration. Nonetheless Mansfield remained an ardent public supporter and defender of the president. Meanwhile, Fulbright continued his relentless attacks on Vietnam policy; He give no quarter to any executive figures who sat before his committee.

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[111] Mike Mansfield, Memorandum to President Johnson, October 9, 1967, National defense files, including UN -led settlement, Vietnam War de-escalation, National Campaign for Negotiation Now, and public opinion on Vietnam War, Johnson administration's Response to Anti-Vietnam War Activities, Part 2: White House Central Files, ND [National Security--Defense], ND 19/CO 312, October 5-10, 1967.
[112] Ibid.

Although Mansfield was continually rejected by the White House, he was still loyal and acted on behalf of Johnson in Congress. One such occasion was the debate over Secretary of State, Dean Rusk's appearance before the Senate Foreign Relation Committee. On November 30, 1967 Fulbright sent a letter requesting that Rusk testify for another public hearing on Vietnam. It had been two years since Rusk's last public appearance before the committee. Mansfield believed that Rusk should come before the committee, a sentiment he made clear to the president in a memorandum on November 21, 1967 but agreed to help stop the appearance if that was the Johnson's wish. Mansfield said to White House Counsel Harry McPherson on December 7, 1967, "All right, I'll try to support him [Johnson]. I think he's wrong, but I'll try to support him."[113] Regardless of Mansfield's continued assistance to the administration his reputation became one of mixed interpretation. In response to a speech Mansfield gave on February 11, 1968, Averell Harriman, a favored ambassador, and trusted advisor of Johnson, wrote to Dean Rusk described Mansfield's speech as "inexcusable." Mike Manatos, Johnson's administrative assistant described Mansfield as, "[making] a conscious effort to associate himself with administration policies rather than articulate the differences he has with it."[114] The idea that Mansfield was loyal to the administration likely made it easier for Johnson to ignore his advice on Vietnam, safe in the knowledge he always supported the administration. Mansfield's image in the administration continued to evolve throughout the year. He was often associated with his Senate colleague Fulbright in reference to his position on Vietnam, though he was a far less outspoken dove than Fulbright. Ironically, Fulbright held Mansfield in some contempt due to his

[113] Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam*, 189-190; Harry McPherson Jr. Memorandum from the Counsel to the President or President Johnson, December 7, 1967, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. V, Vietnam, 1967.
[114] Memorandum of Conversation, February 12, 1968, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. VI, Vietnam, 1968; Mike Manatos cited in *Mansfield and Vietnam*, 191.

opposition of the Rusk hearings and loyalty to President Johnson.[115] Mansfield's support did not matter in the end, when in early February 1968 Johnson decided to allow Rusk to testify to the SFRC.

Johnson's reluctant decision to let Rusk testify was due to a combination of public outcry over the Tet offensive and Fulbright twisting Johnson's arm on the looming foreign aid bill. In preparation for Rusk's appearance, the president met with Fulbright and Mansfield, as well as Senators John Sparkman, George Aiken, and Bourke Hickenlooper. At the meeting Johnson explained his position and that he always sought congressional advice when he said, "I have never taken any position on foreign policy in the Senate that I didn't talk to Mansfield and Fulbright [about]."[116] Johnson's comment was a stretch. Regardless of who advised Johnson, Fulbright or Mansfield, much of their advice solicited or volunteered had been ignored if it did not fall in line with Johnson's existing plan of action. Fulbright later responded to Johnson in the meeting: "I don't have the slightest idea how to run the war and I have never given you advice on it…. What I am trying to do is create a climate which I think would make it much easier for you to stop the war short of victory."[117] Fulbright was telling the truth; he had never given advice to the president about the prosecution of the war. However, the "climate" that Fulbright created around the war had not, from Johnson's perspective, made it easier to end the war but was increasingly tying his hands, and limiting his options to prosecute the conflict.

Fulbright showed his contempt for the administration during Rusk's appearance in front of the SFRC. Fulbright and his dovish committee comrades grilled Rusk on several issues from peace talks to the Gulf of Tonkin incident. In his opening statment, Fulbright gave his opinion

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[115] Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam*, 190.
[116] Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. V, Vietnam, 1967, 341.
[117] Ibid, 342.

on the conflict, "I am more than ever convinced that… our present policies in Vietnam have had and will have effects both abroad and at home that are nothing short of disastrous."[118] Fulbright's peace "climate" took an adversarial role against the White House and their policies. He specifically targeted questions to expand the credibility gap, particularly around the Gulf of Tonkin incident and the administration misleading Congress to pass the Tonkin resolution. Fulbright said "it has recently become clear that much of the information on which Congress acted in adopting the Tonkin resolution was inaccurate"[119] In the end, the second Rusk hearings did not have the same sensational effect on the public as the hearings in 1966. McNamara's departure from the administration, following a difference in opinions in the use of bombing, dominated the coverage of the war. Fulbright also lost some of his credibility regarding Vietnam policy following his vote against the Civil Rights Act of 1968. His vote contradicted his public comments about the Johnson's focus on Vietnam rather than domestic civil unrest.[120]

The end of March 1968 was the culmination of the consequences for Johnson's Vietnam policy. He delivered a speech on the March 31, 1968 declaring he would not seek reelection. Johnson's declaration promised an end to the six-year-long period of expanding the war and begin the long peace process. The end of escalation brought relief to the doves, chief among them Mansfield. Included in his March 31 speech, Johnson promised a halt to bombing except for buildups that "directly threaten allied forces."[121] However, the day after his speech Johnson authorized a bombing near Thanh Hoa, 205 miles north of the border with South Vietnam and

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[118] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations on A bill to Amend Further the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended and for Other Purposes*, 90th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1968, 2.
[119] Ibid, 9.
[120] Woods, *Fulbright*, 479.
[121] Lyndon Johnson, "Remarks on Decision not to Seek Re-Election," March 31, 1968, White House, Washington D.C., University of Virginia, Miller Center, Presidential Speeches

only 81 miles from Hanoi. This bombing led Mansfield to call Johnson concerned with how the bombing might be interpreted. Mansfield's concern was obvious, the general perception of Johnson's speech was that the U.S. would not bomb much more than 80 miles north of the demilitarized zone (DMZ). Johnson responded to Mansfield with a tone just short of fury: "I can't control a man's impressions. That is a power I don't have."[122] Johnson's frustrated tone expressed his growing annoyance with his powerlessness. Mansfield's goal was not to criticize the president but to clarify that he understood the president's stance on the issue. Mansfield also recommended Johnson prepare statements in case the issue came up with the press or in debate. Mansfield's quick response showed his focus never strayed from supporting the president on all fronts even after Johnson rejected reelection.

With Johnson's withdrawal, the cessation of bombing north of the 20th parallel, and the beginning of de-escalation, the long-awaited peace process could begin. In early May 1968, after the limited cessation of bombing, the North Vietnamese agreed to meet an American delegation in Paris. In preparation for the meeting, Johnson met with his advisors to discuss the peace delegation, at the meeting Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford, relayed Fulbright's request, "He wanted Mansfield and John Sherman Cooper in the discussions in Paris."[123] Fulbright's request expressed his interest to involve Congress in the peace process but also showed that despite his annoyance with Mansfield's allegiance to the administration, Mansfield had the greatest level of expertise on the Vietnam issue among the members of the SFRC. Johnson simply responded that they would use the "normal procedure" and discuss it with the senior congressional leadership if needed. This response showed Johnson's desire to never be subject to

[122] Telephone Conversation Among President Johnson, Senator Mike Mansfield, and Secretary of Defense Clifford, April 2, 1968, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. VI, Vietnam, 1968.
[123]Tom Johnson, Notes of Meeting, May 7, 1968, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. VI, Vietnam, 1968.

Congress and least of all Fulbright. Johnson's decision to include only the senior congressional leadership also meant that he would work with legislators who were friendly to his policies, rather than having to compromise with more dovish members of the Congress.

Mansfield finally ended his written campaign to advise the president with his final memorandum to Johnson on July 17, 1968. It reflected his support for peace but included warnings of the United States' lack of bargaining position, when he wrote "we do not have the cards."[124] Mansfield asked the president to completely halt the bombing, and include the National Liberation Front, the leadership of the Viet Cong, and South Vietnam in the negotiations to improve his standing at the conference table. Rostow once again commented on Mansfield in a memorandum to the president a week later. In his comments to Johnson, Rostow noted that Mansfield was missing key facts and attached a draft letter to Mansfield but then recommended Johnson talk to Mansfield about it in person. Rostow's apprehension about Mansfield's lack of knowledge exposed the administration's decision to keep Mansfield uninformed about the events unfolding around the peace talks, as well as, eliminating him from major policy decision-making processes.

Mansfield's final conversation with Johnson about Vietnam came in October 1968. It reflected the relationship they had built since their partnership as Majority Leader and Whip in the Senate. In their conversation, Johnson explained to Mansfield that the North Vietnamese were temporarily pulling out of the peace talks in Paris, due to the absence of NLF representation at the conference. Johnson's tone conveyed his utter exhaustion and frustration with the pace of the peace talks. Johnson was looking for affirmation, he had finally followed his friend's advice,

[124] See third footnote of, Tom Johnson, Notes of Meeting, July 23, 1968, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. VI, Vietnam, 1968

and he was so close to making peace after five long years. Mansfield spoke little but reassured Johnson that the peace talks would continue and that he was on the right track to settle the conflict.[125] Their brief conversation showed that Johnson still looked to Mansfield for advice and affirmation on the issue of Vietnam. Mansfield's advice through the long conflict was rarely heeded and often thwarted by many of the president's other advisors. But Johnson's personal relationship with Mansfield always brought him back for guidance and advice even if he rarely took it. Mansfield's choice to support Johnson and his administration, allowed him to advise the president on Vietnam from the beginning until the end of Johnson's presidency, rather than alienate himself, as Fulbright had, by taking a position of public opposition.

The end of Johnson's administration did not bring peace, but Johnson laid the groundwork for de-escalation that forced the next president to end the war in Vietnam. The change in administration meant new possibilities for Mansfield and Fulbright in their separate tactics to end Vietnam. Fulbright and Johnson, so frustrated with the others' handling of the war did not even speak to each other at Johnson's farewell celebration.[126] Fulbright remained an ardent opponent to Vietnam and one of the major champions for peace during the Nixon Administration. However, for Mansfield, Johnson's departure meant much more. Mansfield no longer had a friend in the White House or a coattail to tug at to drive the president toward the end of the war. Mansfield did not send Nixon the memorandums he sent to Johnson and for the early part of Nixon's administration, remained silent on the issue of Vietnam. Mansfield waited, just short of a year, before beginning a concerted effort to use his position to end the war. Mansfield, finally free of the complex nature of battling his own party in the White House, much like

[125] Telephone Conversation Between President Johnson and Senator Mike Mansfield, October 16, 1968, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. VI, Vietnam, 1968.
[126] Woods, *Fulbright*, 501.

Fulbright, turned to the public forum and begin the battle to end Vietnam and return foreign policy power to the Congress.

Conclusion:

In the conclusion, to bring about the end of the Vietnam War necessitated Mansfield to take public opposition to the war and work with his congressional colleagues to reign in the president's foreign policy powers. Mansfield's decision to not break with Johnson likely extended the war. The Senate Majority Leader may have been able to use his position and influence to bridge the gap between Western liberals such as Wayne Morse and Southern Democrats like Fulbright. Although Mansfield and Fulbright held nearly identical views, their methods of opposition were contrary. For Mansfield, the choice to remain aligned with Johnson was the correct approach. His position as Senate Majority Leader and the primary Democrat responsible for the passing Johnson's "Great Society" legislation meant that he could not split the party over the issue of Vietnam. Instead, he allowed other members of the party to publicly champion that cause. Mansfield's personal relationship to Johnson was also an important factor in his choice to remain publicly silent in his opposition. Mansfield felt that his relationship with Johnson increased the president's likelihood to listen to his advice. Had Kennedy still been in the White House, Mansfield would have been a staunch opponent of the war. Following Kennedy's assassination, the Democratic Party turned Johnson's "Great Society" into a legislative memorial to the slain president. This meant that the Democratic Party was in a strong position to pass legislation with significant public support, a position Mansfield was not willing to sacrifice over opposition to Vietnam. Had Kennedy not been shot in Dallas, the Democratic Party would never have had that strong position. Without a strong impetus for Democratic legislation, Mansfield

would not sacrifice major legislative initiatives if he took a position of public opposition to Vietnam.

Unlike Mansfield, Fulbright was not burdened by the factors that led Mansfield to keep his protest private. Fulbright, a Southern Democrat, opposed Johnson's civil rights legislation. His Senate seat was safe and if the Democratic party was already fracturing over civil rights, he would have little issue splitting it over Vietnam. Fulbright's Arkansas constituency would reward him for opposition to Johnson's civil rights legislation and by extension opposition on other issues. He also had no personal relationship with Johnson that he could leverage to influence the president on Vietnam. Lastly, Fulbright saw it as his responsibility to develop alternative foreign policy as Chairman of the SFRC further influencing his decision to publicly battle White House policy. Therefore, the best choice, following his schism with the Johnson Administration was for Fulbright to take his opposition public. Mansfield and Fulbright's clash over Vietnam in 1966, showed just how far each was willing to go to continue their methods of opposition. Mansfield, directly opposing policy suggestions he agreed with, and Fulbright debating the majority leader from his own party.

The research and analysis of Mansfield and Fulbright's opposition to Vietnam shows that the primary factors in their choice of public or private protest were: position in government, personal relationship with Johnson, and allegiance to the Democratic Party agenda. Mansfield, the Senate majority leader, a friend of Johnson, and Western liberal was committed to private protest to advance the Democratic agenda and stay loyal to his friend. On the other hand, Fulbright, the Chairman of the SFRC, opponent of Johnson and Southern Democrat was an opponent to Johnson on domestic issues and an opponent to his foreign policy. In the end, the nature of Mansfield and Fulbright's form of opposition, came down to what was most important

to each man. For Mansfield, the development of a more equal United States with robust social programs and civil rights, and for Fulbright, maintenance of American foreign policy and victory in the Cold War.

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